

For immediate release:

What: 5th Annual Seagrass Awareness Celebration

**When: March 26, 2005
10:00 am until 3:00 pm**

**Where: Shoreline Park South, Gulf Breeze (Across from the
Recreation center on Shoreline Drive)**

**Contact: Chris Verlinde 623-3868
christinav@co.santa-rosa.fl.us,
Deborah Holland, 983-5359,
hollanddebbie@bellsouth.net.**

Seagrass Awareness is an annual family orientated event held at Shoreline Park South in Gulf Breeze, Florida. This year activities will include a marine themed Easter egg hunt at 10:15 am, touch tanks, "*eat a seagrass bed*," seining, games, learn how to throw a cast net, arts and crafts, kayaking and more!

Bring a friend, lunch, water, sunscreen, hat, water shoes, lawn chairs and join us for a fun filled day!

Participating organizations include: The Environmental Education Coordination Team, Gulf Islands National Seashore, Florida Sea Grant Extension, Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Clean Marina Program, Aquatic Preserves, and Ecosystem Restoration, the Resource Ranger, Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida, US Fish and Wildlife Service and more!

Donations for the Northwest Florida Wildlife Sanctuary will be accepted at the celebration. Needed items include: paper towels, pecans, Purina puppy and cat chow, .37 stamps, deer feed, liquid laundry soap, sweet feed and cash.

March is Seagrass Awareness Month in Florida!

Seagrasses are a valuable part of the marine environment and support a thriving million-dollar fishery. Most commercial and recreationally important fish, crabs and shrimp spend some time of their lives in seagrass beds. These grass beds help to filter toxins from the water, contribute to water clarity by trapping suspended sediments, provide food and shelter for juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs, provide food for manatees, green sea turtles, and migratory birds depend

on seagrass beds for foraging needs! Threats to these important resources include: degraded water quality, dredge and fill projects and physical impacts from boat propellers.

In our area, the “true” marine seagrass species include: shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*), manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*), and some species of *Halophia*. In the upper parts of the bays, another ecologically important submerged aquatic plant is tape grass, (*Vallisneria americana*).

The term submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is a general term that includes grasses found submerged in salt, brackish and fresh water environments.

“Seagrassit’s alive” is the motto for this initiative. Get involved, and help spread the word about seagrasses this month! Be creative and provide educational opportunities for your friends, neighbors, fisher-people, boaters and those concerned about water quality.

Extension Service programs are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin.



Seagrass....It's alive

